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## Viewing cable 06MANAGUA2053, NORTHERNERS BEMOAN MANAGUA NEGLECT TO AMBASSADOR

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### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#06MANAGUA2053**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">06MANAGUA2053</a>	<a href="#">2006-09-18 22:12</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Managua</a>

Appears in these articles:

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 002053

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DEPT FOR WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/05/2016  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [SOCI](#) [NU](#)  
SUBJECT: NORTHERNERS BEMOAN MANAGUA NEGLECT TO AMBASSADOR

Classified By: Ambassador Paul Trivelli for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The pressing needs of local leaders, NGO's and election campaigns were clearly presented during the Ambassador's recent trip to the rural northern departments of Madriz, Nuevo Segovia, and Esteli. The Ambassador garnered considerable support for his anti Aleman-Ortega pact message and was courteously received by all leaders, including members of the Sandinista Front (FSLN). The Ambassador inaugurated various USAID development sites and lunched with local Peace Corps volunteers. Distinct from the atmosphere of Managua, the politics of this rural area are wrapped up in the needs of the people. ALN and MRS campaign leaders feel neglected by leadership in Managua and current FSLN and PLC mayors face problems and challenges for which they lack support. Election fraud is another area of concern in these northern departments and democracy NGO's face specific challenges such as educating the voter over a large area where transportation is difficult. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) (SBU) Ambassador and poloffs traveled to the Northern Departments of Madriz, Esteli, and Nuevo Segovia on August 29-30 as part of the Ambassadors continuing pre-election tour. He met with the Nicaraguan Liberal Alliance (ALN) and the Sandinista Renovation Movement (MRS) campaign committees of each department, as well as with local mayors of different parties. He also met with the Movement for Nicaragua (MpN) and Ethics and Transparency (EyT) representatives from the three regions, as well as the Supreme Electoral Council (CSE) regional representatives. In addition, he spoke to members of the private sector and economic associations from the three regions. The Ambassador took the opportunity to visit two USAID project sites, the pediatric wing of a local hospital, and a rural nutrition fair where he was very well received and lunched with local Peace Corps volunteers. At the end of the trip he was interviewed by Radio ABC, a politically centrist station with a large listening audience. His visit drew considerable attention and coverage by the local and national press.

LOCAL LEADERS EXPRESS SERIOUS NEEDS AND CONCERNS, FEEL  
NEGLECTED BY MANAGUA LEADERSHIP

¶3. (C) All three ALN committees expressed a strong need for more attention and dedication from their party's campaign leadership in Managua, noting they feel neglected and lack campaign materials and funds. (Note: This disconnect was also the main flaw of the ALN campaign on the Atlantic Coast. While the party leadership is aware of the problem, it still persists. END NOTE.) Domination by the FSLN and PLC of the primary means of communication in the area also hinders local

ALN campaign efforts. Raul Herrera, National Assembly deputy candidate for Esteli was confident that with well trained party poll watchers (fiscales) and support from central leadership, they can win one of the Assembly seats in the department, but doubted that Montealegre will carry FSLN-dominated Esteli. He believed that an alliance with the MRS is potentially a more viable option than one with the PLC, which may still be necessary to prevent FSLN candidate Daniel Ortega from winning on the first round.

¶4. (C) MRS Committee members noted that since the July death of leader Herty Lewites, campaign funds have dried up. Nevertheless, they were very enthusiastic about their party's efforts and asserted that the polls are improving and presidential candidate Edmundo Jarquin is popular with educated youth. First Assembly deputy candidate in Esteli, Amado Briones, enthusiastically declared that the 2006 election is the greatest chance in Nicaraguan history to establish a true democracy and the first election that involves more than two major parties. They reiterated that most MRS members used to be members of the FSLN, their parents were FSLN, but Ortega has betrayed them and the revolution. They accused the FSLN of changing their long-standing position on therapeutic abortion to appease the Catholic church and said that the FSLN is using intimidation tactics (such as threatening people that they will lose their jobs if they don't vote for Ortega) to secure the vote in these rural departments. Nuevo Segovia and Madriz MRS members assured the Ambassador that in the event of a second round, they would support Eduardo Montealegre and they would cooperate with the ALN after the election. However, MRS members in Esteli held firm that if any party other than the MRS wins, it will equate to an FSLN victory, given the nature of the Aleman-Ortega pact and Eduardo Montealegre's continued problems with the CENI scandal. All involved are very concerned about Nicaragua's options if the FSLN steals the election as well as being wary of close ties with the United States, at the risk of negative public perception.

¶5. (C) Current PLC and FSLN leaders also expressed needs and frustrations with national leadership. PLC mayors from municipalities in Nuevo Segovia report they need money for nutrition programs and education that they are not receiving from the central government. Mayor of San Juan del Rio Coco, Santos Javier Castellon lamented a "political poverty" that accompanies the extreme poverty present in the region. Mayor of San Nicolas in Esteli, Damacio Rizo (PLC) said that his municipality does not have a health center and is completely ignored by the Ministry of Health. For this neglect, they both blame the Bolanos administration. Even the FSLN mayors from Madriz told us they wished the central government would give them more attention. They are aware that "aid money pours into this country" and are frustrated that "they never see it". Mayor of San Juan de Limay in Esteli, Maria Espinoza, noted that money approved for local projects seldom reaches its destination. Their most real concern is the development of their municipalities and providing general services to their citizens.

¶6. (C) The FSLN leaders also desire that an elected Sandinista (FSLN) government be able to work with the United States and are very anxious about whether or not this will happen. According to FSLN mayors, this is the first meeting of a U.S. Ambassador with FSLN mayors in the region. On the whole, they see themselves as democratically elected leaders who are respectful of democracy -- noting their interest in helping their people -- and seemed disconnected from the central leadership that directly hinders their efforts.

#### TWO TALES OF ONE CSE - - - - -

¶7. (C) The leadership of all parties we saw, without exception, criticized the behavior of local CSE offices, claiming that they only issue national ID/voter identification cards (cedulas) to supporters of their own party. Briones, MRS deputy candidate in Esteli called the

CSE "16 mafiosos and 92 bums". ALN committee leaders wanted to know what pressure international observers could place on the CSE to encourage them to be more transparent and accountable. MRS leaders also related that the FSLN is registering its, but not other voters. The PLC in Nuevo Segovia was concerned that the FSLN controls all government offices and have been consolidating power and control since 1990. (Note: In fact, all of the mayors in Madriz are members of the FSLN. END NOTE.)

18. (C) Democracy NGO's such as MpN and EyT are critical of the CSE, observing that only PLC and FSLN members hold CSE positions and it is a partisan organization. A majority of FSLN mayors in three departments signifies that the party controls local government mechanisms and enjoys access to voter lists and ballots. They also reported major flaws in the voter registration process including lack of leadership will, parties filling out forms for voters, the high cost of registration, partisan bias on the part of local mayors, and FSLN control of local radio stations. MpN representative in Esteli Xochilt Merlo, reported that of the 650 cedula solicited during the extension, not one has been returned from Managua. Now, there is little they can do but pressure the CSE to deliver the cedulas. Concerning voter abstentionism, Merlo believes that many young voters are disillusioned and do not want to vote because they cannot identify a viable option. MpN representative in Nuevo Segovia, Harold Bermudez, was concerned about the status of Montealegre's campaign. He opined that the campaign must retune its message towards anti-pacto themes and away from anti-FSLN themes, as the local citizens are intelligent voters who need information to link the PLC to corruption and to the FSLN.

19. (C) The CSE representatives from each department defended their work to the Ambassador. Rommel Reyes, CSE rep for Nuevo Segovia and PLC member, asserted that one cannot oblige the people to register or to vote. He also claimed that about 70 percent of the citizens who solicited their cedula during the application extension period would be issued "supplementary documents" for use on 5 November and they will receive their actual cedulas in the spring. Reyes stated that he believes strongly in a two party system and that the PLC can win in his department. Jaime Borge, CSE representative in Madriz, also of the PLC, believes that criticisms of the CSE are entirely politically motivated and that everyone with the desire to register in his department has been afforded a fair opportunity. Serious and sharp, the CSE representative in Esteli Antonio Benavides, said that while he is a Sandinista (FSLN) as a person, in his job he has no political motivations, accepting that criticisms come with the position. Beyond this, he believes the CSE will execute a fair and transparent election

#### THE ALEMAN-ORTEGA PACT IN ACTION

10. (C) Many interlocutors voiced concerns over the possibility of massive corruption of the vote in rural areas by interfering with the voter registration process and the vote itself. ALN leadership reported that the PLC's claims to have the rural vote secured are false. Quite the opposite, they believe that the PLC's rural machinery is crumbling and the rural vote can be fought for and won. However, MpN and EyT representatives from the same region believe that the PLC still maintains considerable sway in rural areas. ALN leaders asserted that the pact is actively at work -- displayed through the CSE actions, manipulation of information, and Arnoldo Aleman's continued control of the PLC. They were also very concerned that the PLC and the FSLN are working together to prepare serious election fraud and that very little can be done to prevent it, as the two parties control local government, giving them control of the telephone system and ballot transportation.

11. (C) Additionally, ALN leaders asserted that the Christian Alternative party (AC) does not "exist"; rather it is simply a front party for the FSLN that appeals to religious voters.

They noted that rural voters are confused because they see two liberal parties and are unsure for whom they should vote.

According to the ALN leaders, the PLC manipulates voters with disinformation e.g. telling voters who intend to vote for Eduardo to mark box #1, the PLC box. ALN leaders recognized that the rural vote will be important for this election, with the ALN campaign leader in Madriz estimating that 70-75 percent of the vote in that department is rural.

¶12. (C) Mayor of Jicaró, Hugo Gomez, formally of the PLC and a possible candidate to transfer to the ALN, came to speak with the Ambassador with his four-year-old son in tow. As Ramoncito eagerly dug into a pint of ice cream, Gomez nervously expressed that his municipality suffers from extreme poverty, insecurity, and unemployment and that people lack schools and health care. He termed the voter registration process corrupt, saying there was no CSE office in his town until three months ago and that the FSLN controls all CSE documents. Gomez claims that he was expelled from the party because he complained to his local party leadership for continuously compromising with the FSLN and granting them undue political space. He confirmed that he is considering joining the ALN and will certainly vote for them, but remains afraid of the possible repercussions.

#### UNIFICATION OF THE RIGHT

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¶13. (C) Despite rising doubts about the feasibility and benefits of the unification of the Right, the Ambassador heard many appeals to this effect. Both PLC and ALN members wanted to know what is being done to bring the two sides together. There is a great deal of concern and anxiety that Daniel Ortega will win the election; thus, Liberal representatives see unification as the only solution. Mayor of San Juan del Rio Coco asserted that if the Right does not come together, the country will be open to communism, "a cancer that eats away until Nicaragua dies." Many expressed their belief that the PLC is the only party with enough infrastructure to defeat the FSLN. When members of the PLC were asked how they view polls, they stated that no private poll is believable. MpN representatives in the region shared this skepticism in the polls, opining that the polls are administered to advance the interests of one party.

¶14. (C) Concerned members of the regional economic and commercial sector expressed a desire for the two parties of the right to settle their differences and come together, for the betterment of the country. They saw what happened to the country in the 1980's when Ortega ran it and believe that everything should be done to prevent an FSLN victory. They warned that the economy will continue to suffer because people are afraid to invest and have their property/possessions confiscated, adding that the FSLN's economic plan is untenable.

TRIVELLI